

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

\* \* \*

ANTONIO LEE MIXON,

Case No. 2:16-cv-02014-RFB-GWF

**Plaintiff,**

## SCREENING ORDER

v.

**STATE OF NEVADA et al.,**

## Defendants.

Plaintiff, who is a prisoner in the custody of the Nevada Department of Corrections (“NDOC”), has submitted a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and has filed an application to proceed *in forma pauperis*, a motion for appointment of counsel, and a motion for an evidentiary hearing. (ECF No. 1-1, 10, 11, 12). The Court now screens Plaintiff’s civil rights complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

## I. IN FORMA PAUPERIS APPLICATION

Before the Court is Plaintiff's application to proceed *in forma pauperis*. (ECF No. 10). Based on the information regarding Plaintiff's financial status, the Court finds that Plaintiff is not able to pay an initial installment payment toward the full filing fee pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Plaintiff will, however, be required to make monthly payments toward the full \$350.00 filing fee when he has funds available.

## **II. SCREENING STANDARD**

Federal courts must conduct a preliminary screening in any case in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a

1 governmental entity. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). In its review, the court must identify any  
2 cognizable claims and dismiss any claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim  
3 upon which relief may be granted or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune  
4 from such relief. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1),(2). *Pro se* pleadings, however, must be  
5 liberally construed. *Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep’t*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1990).  
6 To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege two essential elements:  
7 (1) the violation of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States, and  
8 (2) that the alleged violation was committed by a person acting under color of state law.  
9 See *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988).

10 In addition to the screening requirements under § 1915A, pursuant to the Prison  
11 Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), a federal court must dismiss a prisoner’s claim, if “the  
12 allegation of poverty is untrue,” or if the action “is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a  
13 claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who  
14 is immune from such relief.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). Dismissal of a complaint for failure  
15 to state a claim upon which relief can be granted is provided for in Federal Rule of Civil  
16 Procedure 12(b)(6), and the court applies the same standard under § 1915 when  
17 reviewing the adequacy of a complaint or an amended complaint. When a court  
18 dismisses a complaint under § 1915(e), the plaintiff should be given leave to amend the  
19 complaint with directions as to curing its deficiencies, unless it is clear from the face of  
20 the complaint that the deficiencies could not be cured by amendment. See *Cato v. United*  
21 *States*, 70 F.3d 1103, 1106 (9th Cir. 1995).

22 Review under Rule 12(b)(6) is essentially a ruling on a question of law. See  
23 *Chappel v. Lab. Corp. of America*, 232 F.3d 719, 723 (9th Cir. 2000). Dismissal for failure  
24 to state a claim is proper only if it is clear that the plaintiff cannot prove any set of facts in  
25 support of the claim that would entitle him or her to relief. See *Morley v. Walker*, 175 F.3d  
26 756, 759 (9th Cir. 1999). In making this determination, the court takes as true all  
27 allegations of material fact stated in the complaint, and the court construes them in the  
28 light most favorable to the plaintiff. See *Warshaw v. Xoma Corp.*, 74 F.3d 955, 957 (9th

1 Cir. 1996). Allegations of a *pro se* complainant are held to less stringent standards than  
2 formal pleadings drafted by lawyers. See *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9 (1980). While  
3 the standard under Rule 12(b)(6) does not require detailed factual allegations, a plaintiff  
4 must provide more than mere labels and conclusions. *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*,  
5 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007). A formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action is  
6 insufficient. *Id.*

7 Additionally, a reviewing court should “begin by identifying pleadings [allegations]  
8 that, because they are no more than mere conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption  
9 of truth.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 679 (2009). “While legal conclusions can  
10 provide the framework of a complaint, they must be supported with factual allegations.”  
11 *Id.* “When there are well-pleaded factual allegations, a court should assume their veracity  
12 and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.” *Id.*  
13 “Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief . . . [is] a context-  
14 specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and  
15 common sense.” *Id.*

16 Finally, all or part of a complaint filed by a prisoner may therefore be dismissed  
17 *sua sponte* if the prisoner’s claims lack an arguable basis either in law or in fact. This  
18 includes claims based on legal conclusions that are untenable (e.g., claims against  
19 defendants who are immune from suit or claims of infringement of a legal interest which  
20 clearly does not exist), as well as claims based on fanciful factual allegations (e.g.,  
21 fantastic or delusional scenarios). See *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327-28 (1989);  
22 see also *McKeever v. Block*, 932 F.2d 795, 798 (9th Cir. 1991).

23 **III. SCREENING OF COMPLAINT**

24 In the complaint, Plaintiff sues multiple defendants for events that took place while  
25 Plaintiff was incarcerated at High Desert State Prison (“HDSP”). (ECF No. 1-1 at 1).  
26 Plaintiff sues Defendants State of Nevada, Nevada Department of Corrections (“NDOC”),  
27 and Warden D.W. Neven. (*Id.* at 2). Plaintiff alleges one count and seeks \$7,000,000 in  
28 monetary damages. (*Id.* at 4, 7).

1           The complaint alleges the following: Neven and his delegates took trade secrets,  
2 trade names, trademarks, logos, ideas, and lyrics from albums that Plaintiff sent home **to**  
3 **be copyrighted.** (*Id.* at 3). HDSP correctional officers grabbed two of Plaintiff's  
4 envelopes marked "don't open" from Plaintiff's door. (*Id.*) Prison officials mailed one  
5 envelope to Plaintiff's home but returned the other envelope to Plaintiff opened. (*Id.*)  
6 Prison officials never gave the opened envelope to the postmaster. (*Id.*) Prison officials  
7 had picked up the second envelope from Plaintiff's door and returned it to Plaintiff a day  
8 or two later. (*Id.* at 4). Plaintiff alleges violations of the right to privacy, the right to  
9 copyright protection infringement, and the right to protection against plagiarism. (*Id.*)

10          The Court finds that Plaintiff fails to allege any colorable claim based on the right  
11 to privacy, copyright protection infringement, or plagiarism. With respect to Plaintiff's  
12 privacy claim, the First Amendment permits prison officials to visually inspect outgoing  
13 mail to determine whether it contains contraband material which threatens prison security  
14 or material threatening the safety of the recipient. *Witherow v. Paff*, 52 F.3d 264, 266 (9th  
15 Cir. 1995). As such, prison officials did not violate Plaintiff's rights by opening Plaintiff's  
16 outgoing mail despite Plaintiff's written admonishment of "don't open." Additionally, there  
17 are no allegations in the complaint that support a copyright infringement or plagiarism  
18 claim, as the Plaintiff has not alleged the ownership of a copyrighted work or the copying  
19 of original elements of that work. See *Feist Publ'ns, Inc. v. Rural Tel. Serv. Co.*, 499 U.S.  
20 340, 361 (1991). Accordingly, the Court dismisses the entire complaint, with prejudice, as  
21 amendment would be futile, for failure to state a claim. The Court also denies Plaintiff's  
22 motion for evidentiary hearing. (ECF No. 12).

23 **IV. MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL**

24          Plaintiff has filed a motion for appointment of counsel. (ECF No. 11). A litigant  
25 does not have a constitutional right to appointed counsel in 42 U.S.C. § 1983 civil rights  
26 claims. *Storseth v. Spellman*, 654 F.2d 1349, 1353 (9th Cir. 1981). Pursuant to 28 U.S.C.  
27 § 1915(e)(1), "[t]he court may request an attorney to represent any person unable to  
28 afford counsel." However, the court will appoint counsel for indigent civil litigants only in

1 "exceptional circumstances." *Palmer v. Valdez*, 560 F.3d 965, 970 (9th Cir. 2009) (§ 1983  
2 action). "When determining whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist, a court must  
3 consider 'the likelihood of success on the merits as well as the ability of the petitioner to  
4 articulate his claims *pro se* in light of the complexity of the legal issues involved." *Id.*  
5 "Neither of these considerations is dispositive and instead must be viewed together." *Id.*  
6 In the instant case, the Court does not find exceptional circumstances that warrant the  
7 appointment of counsel. The Court denies the motion for appointment of counsel.

8 **V. CONCLUSION**

9 For the foregoing reasons,

10 IT IS ORDERED that Plaintiff's application to proceed *in forma pauperis* (ECF No.  
11 10) without having to prepay the full filing fee is **GRANTED**. Plaintiff shall **not** be required  
12 to pay an initial installment fee. Nevertheless, the full filing fee shall still be due, pursuant  
13 to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, as amended by the Prisoner Litigation Reform Act. The movant  
14 herein is permitted to maintain this action to conclusion without the necessity of  
15 prepayment of fees or costs or the giving of security therefor. This order granting *in forma*  
16 *pauperis* status shall not extend to the issuance and/or service of subpoenas at  
17 government expense.

18 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, as amended by  
19 the Prisoner Litigation Reform Act, the Nevada Department of Corrections shall pay to  
20 the Clerk of the United States District Court, District of Nevada, 20% of the preceding  
21 month's deposits to the account of **Antonio Lee Mixon, #1019828** (in months that the  
22 account exceeds \$10.00) until the full \$350 filing fee has been paid for this action. The  
23 Clerk shall send a copy of this order to the attention of **Albert G. Peralta, Chief of Inmate**  
24 **Services for the Nevada Department of Prisons**, P.O. Box 7011, Carson City, NV  
25 89702.

26 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court shall file the complaint (ECF  
27 No. 1-1).

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IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Complaint is dismissed in its entirety, with prejudice, as amendment would be futile, for failure to state a claim.

3 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the motion for appointment of counsel (ECF No.  
4 11) is denied.

5 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the motion for evidentiary hearing (ECF No. 12)  
6 is denied.

7 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Court certifies that any *in forma pauperis*  
8 appeal from this order would **not** be taken “in good faith” pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §  
9 1915(a)(3).

10 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court shall enter judgment  
11 accordingly.

13 DATED this 30th day of September, 2017.

8

**RICHARD F. BOULWARE, II  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE**